

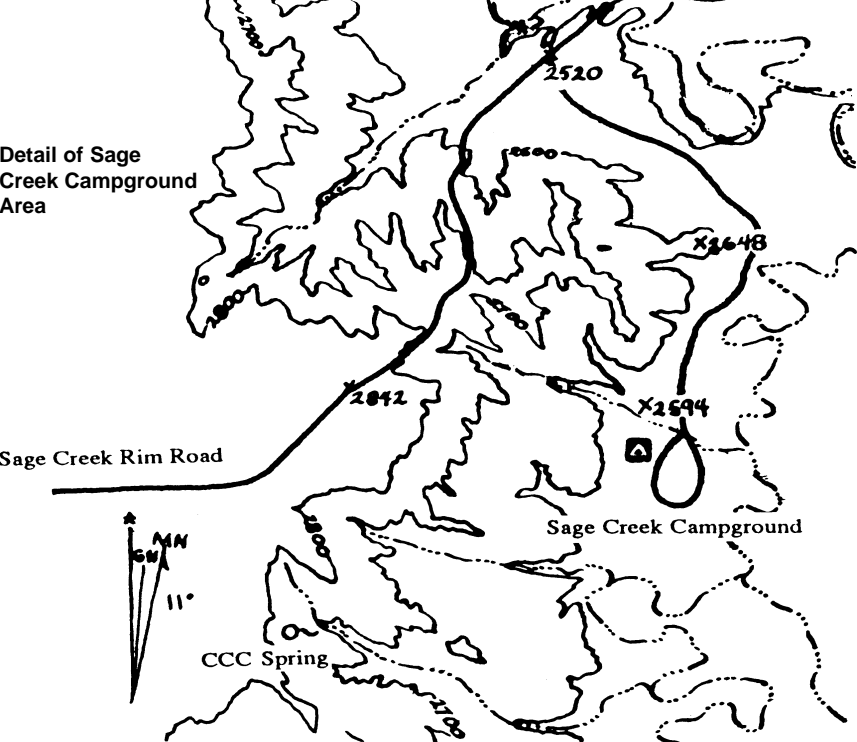
# Horse Use

Badlands National Park  
P.O. Box 6  
Interior, South Dakota 57750



French fur trappers labeled them “*les mauvaises terres a traverser*” - bad lands to travel across. Riding through this untamed land allows the equestrian to judge the accuracy of this description. Besides spectacular views of strangely carved formations interrupting a sea of prairie, the horseback explorer in Badlands National Park has the opportunity to see bison, pronghorn, bighorn sheep, and coyotes. This modern day landscape also protects ancient landscape features and fossils laid down nearly 35 million years ago.

## Where to Ride



The Badlands Wilderness Area is located in the Sage Creek drainage and consists of 64,000 acres of eroded spires and mixed grass prairie, offering prime horseback riding terrain. Although most riders confine themselves to the Wilderness Area, horseback riding is allowed anywhere in the park except on marked trails, roads, highways, and developed areas. For day ride access, vehicles and horse trailers may be parked at overlooks and parking areas. Off road driving is strictly prohibited. There are no designated riding trails in the park but maps are sold at both the Ben Reifel and White River Visitor Centers to assist backcountry riders in planning a trip.

## Sage Creek Campground

A portion of the Sage Creek Campground is designated for horse use. No water is available at the campground. Riders should bring sufficient amounts for themselves and their stock. Hitching posts are provided. Riders must provide weed free hay or pellets for feed. Horses should not be allowed to run free or be picketed in the campground. No fires are allowed except in contained grills. The campground stay limit is 14 nights.

## Fire And Water: For Your Safety and Ours

There is no potable water for human consumption in the Badlands backcountry. Water sources for domestic livestock are scarce. Horses not accustomed to Badlands water probably will not drink it. You must pack in all drinking water for human use, using the rate of at least one gallon per person per day. It is also strongly recommended that you pack in drinking water for your horses and pack animals (at least five gallons per animal per day).

Under no circumstances are any fires permitted in Badlands National Park. Additionally it is unlawful to collect wood for fires or any other use.

## Regulations Regarding Horse Use

- ✓ Only certified weed free hay or processed horse feed products may be brought into the park. A list of vendors is available from the park.
- ✓ Horses and pack animals are not allowed to run loose, be loose herded, or trailed.
- ✓ The tying of horses and pack animals to any living or dead feature that causes damage to the feature, vegetation, or soil is prohibited.
- ✓ Picketed horses and pack animals shall not be kept within 100 feet of trails, campsites, or water source.
- ✓ Picket pins should be packed in. Picket pin sites must be moved frequently to prevent overgrazing or other damage to vegetation. The pins must be pulled out of the ground prior to leaving camp.
- ✓ Horse and pack animal manure must be completely removed from the campground and must be well scattered in any other grazing areas in the park.
- ✓ If a horse or pack animal is lost or dies within park boundaries, the loss must be reported as soon as possible to park staff.
- ✓ Dogs and other pets are not allowed in the Badlands Wilderness Area.
- ✓ Collecting natural, historical, paleontological, or archaeological objects is strictly prohibited. Natural features must not be disturbed or destroyed.

## For Your Safety

Badlands weather is very unpredictable. Sudden changes can occur in any season. Summer riders should be prepared for extreme heat and the onset of severe thunderstorms accompanied by high winds, rain, dangerous hail, and possibly tornadoes. If a lightning storm should occur, dismount immediately and seek a low area. Badlands winters can be pleasantly mild and comfortable at times but sudden blizzards can bring blinding snow, high winds, and sub-zero temperatures. Spring and fall are favorites in the Badlands when days are warm and nights are cool. Spring is quite rainy with deep mud conditions. Late spring and early fall blizzards are always a possibility.

Buffalo roam through the wilderness area; do not approach them. They are potentially dangerous especially during calving and breeding seasons. The Badlands is also the home of the prairie rattlesnake, the only poisonous snake in the park. This species of rattlesnake is not aggressive but give all snakes a wide berth. Remember that all wildlife is protected in the park and should not be disturbed.

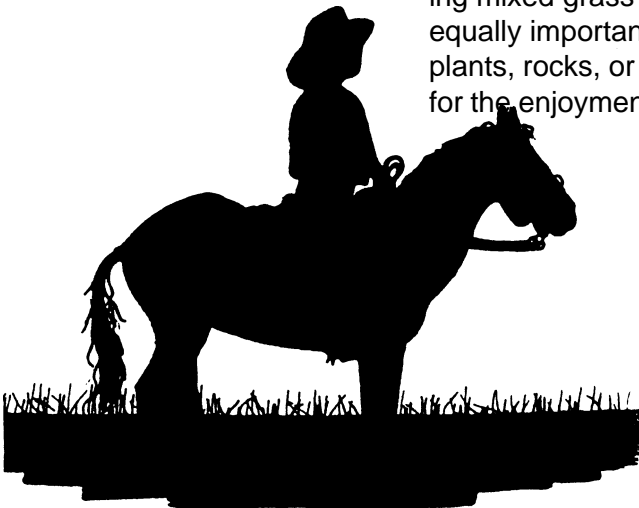
Adventurous riders may want to try an overnight expedition into the Badlands. Backcountry camps must be at least one-half mile from all roads, developed areas or marked trails. Backcountry grazing is allowed for livestock of overnight campers. Because fire hazard is very high, no fires are allowed at any time in the backcountry. Always use a backpacking stove. All other horse use regulations apply to backcountry users.

## Commercial Use

No commercial horse rental or day rides are available in Badlands National Park. However, outfitters may offer overnight backcountry trips under a commercial use license. Inquire at the visitor centers to discover if there are any currently licensed providers.

## Yours to Enjoy

Badlands National Park was established in 1939 to preserve the geologic formations and protect the rich fossil resources. Over time, the disappearing mixed grass prairie ecosystem and diverse human history have become equally important parts of the park's story. Please do not collect fossils, plants, rocks, or wildlife. Careful use on your part will help preserve this area for the enjoyment of all who travel this way after you.



Printed on recycled paper

Updated September, 2000

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